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Library Services and Construction Act: Testimonies (1994): Correspondence 01

Paul W. Schroeder

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AMERICAN COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

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Oral O. Miller, J.D.
National Representative

October 14, 1994

Hon. Claiborne Pell
Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and
Humanities
648 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

I am pleased to provide you with a copy of a resolution which was approved by the membership of the American Council of the Blind at our recent annual convention. The resolution urges several policy changes for consideration in the reauthorization of the Library Services and Construction Act.

The American Council of the Blind is a large and diverse national organization of blind men and women. ABC has had a strong history of advocacy regarding access to and use of information. Our advocacy efforts have focused broadly on the topic, ranging from support for the provision of documents in Braille and other alternative formats readable by blind people to our current action to attempt to require accessibility of the National Information Infrastructure.

Public libraries have not been a consistent and reliable source from which blind people who are blind or visually impaired could obtain information and services. In many ways, the National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has filled the gap by providing books and other materials in accessible formats. However, ABC believes that public libraries can, and must, be a source of information and services accessible to and usable by people who are blind or visually impaired. The resolution sets out several steps which should be pursued, either through the reauthorization of LSCA or through other means. These options include:

1. establish standards which ensure that new information technology (from Internet hookups and collection databases to the equipment necessary to use these services) is accessible to and usable by individuals with a variety of disabling conditions;
2. encourage the development of collections which include a variety of resources and media, including audio recordings, large print material, and described videos;

3. foster the provision of information about library and community services to the public through both analog (telephone) and digital (electronic) means;
4. direct that persons with disabilities, including individuals with visual impairments, be included on library advisory committees;
5. ensure that the availability of public transportation is considered in determining a site for the construction or expansion of a public library;
6. develop innovative outreach programs whose express purpose is to encourage participation in the services and activities of public libraries by people with disabilities.

I am also enclosing other material which may provide important additional background. While this material focuses largely upon the issues of access to technology, we in no way wish to diminish the importance of other library service and access issues such as the proximity and availability of public transportation, the diversity of the collection and the importance of including individuals with vision impairments on advisory committees.

ABC appreciates your interest in the concerns of library users who are blind or visually impaired. We are very eager to work with you in ensuring that our nation's public libraries serve the full community, including individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Public libraries are likely to become one of the first key links between the public and the resources of the NII and we want to ensure that our constituency is connected. In addition, the great variety of materials housed in or available to our nation's libraries should be more fully available to blind individuals.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need any further details about this information.

Sincerely,



Paul W. Schroeder
Director of Governmental Affairs

cc: Jeanne Hurley Simon, Chairperson, NCLIS
Arthur Curley, President, ALA
Hon. Pat Williams, Chairperson, House Education and Labor Committee's
Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations
Hon. Charlie Rose, Chairperson, Joint Committee on the Library

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